United Nations E/2017/SR.43

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
8 September 2017

Original: English

2017 session
28 July 2016-27 July 2017
High-level segment

Summary record of the 43rd meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 17 July 2017, at 9 a.m.

President: Mr. Shava ..... (Zimbabwe)

Contents

Agenda item 5: High-level segment

Opening of the segment

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent as soon as possible to the Chief of the Documents Management Section (dms@un.org).

Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org/).

17-12050 (E)

Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 9.10 a.m.

Agenda item 5: High-level segment (E/2017/33 and E/2017/64)

Opening of the segment

1. **The President** declared open the high-level segment of the 2017 session of the Economic and Social Council, including the three-day ministerial meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the Council.

Statement by the President

2. **The President** said that despite a steady decline in recent decades, the total number of people living in extreme poverty remained unacceptably high. Inequalities among and within countries remained deep. Conflicts, tensions and terrorism threatened humanity, and many regions were feeling the impact of climate change.

3. In the face of such challenges, the solidarity and cooperation that characterized multilateralism were more important than ever, and collective support for the poor and most vulnerable was in everyone's interest. That solidarity was embodied in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals, a historic Agenda that demanded innovative and far-reaching action at the local, national, regional and international levels. The 2030 Agenda also required increased integration, strong coordination and enhanced collaboration between and within countries.

4. The theme of the 2017 high-level political forum on sustainable development under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council was "Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world". Poverty eradication was indispensable to sustainable development, and it required synergies across all dimensions of sustainable development and a special focus on marginalized people and communities so as to leave no one behind.

5. The 2017 high-level political forum was the first to review the progress that had been made towards achieving seven out of the 17 Goals. The review had highlighted the interconnectedness of the economic, environmental and social dimensions of sustainable development and had underscored the need for an integrated approach. Countries were improving their inter-institutional and intersectoral coordination and had adopted sustainable development strategies. In addition, parliaments were mainstreaming the Goals, and provinces were implementing the Goals locally.

6. Social inclusion, access to health care, education, energy and safe infrastructure vital to national development were all important for poverty eradication. Women and girls, especially those who lived in poverty, were disproportionally impacted by climate change, disasters and conflict but were nevertheless the primary drivers of development and must be empowered as agents of change.

7. A lack of official statistics, data and effective monitoring remained a significant challenge in terms of measuring progress towards the Goals, both domestically and globally. Integrated and coherent implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the national level required interministerial collaboration and a clear connection to the means of implementation. It also required full multi-stakeholder engagement.

8. The ministerial segment of the high-level forum, including the presentation of 44 voluntary national reviews and two special events, a Business Forum and a Partnership Exchange, would doubtless contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Statement by the President of the General Assembly

9. **Mr. Thomson** (Fiji), President of the General Assembly, said that during the seventy-first session of the General Assembly, every effort had been made to drive momentum for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals through a series of high-level events and awareness-raising meetings with Heads of State, multilateral bodies, regional commissions, United Nations country teams, philanthropic foundations, business leaders, women's groups, grass-roots actors, students and young people all over the world. Progress on the Goals also required on-the-ground implementation. Everyone must be made aware of the Goals, so that citizens understood their rights and responsibilities with respect to global sustainability. Governments and universities had been urged to incorporate the Goals in educational curricula. Meaningful partnerships were vital to the cause; success would depend on Governments, civil society, investors and grass-roots organizations. The Ocean Conference that had been held at United Nations Headquarters in June had been an example of that spirit of partnership. Thousands of participants from the global community had gathered to identify the problems facing the oceans, and through focused partnership dialogues, a comprehensive set of solutions

had been produced and were being prepared for implementation.

10. In order to achieve the Goals, the necessary resources must be mobilized and official development assistance (ODA) commitments must be met. The financial sector was ready to fund Goal-related infrastructure projects. Technology, innovation and interconnectivity should also be harnessed towards the achievement of the Goals. In East Africa, for example, digital services afforded access to banking and health care, and such services integrated labour markets into the global economy.

11. Much remained to be done to promote rights, equal opportunity, economic empowerment and political participation for women and girls. However, change was under way and would be an incremental driver of equality, growth and sustainability.

Statement by the Secretary-General

12. **The Secretary-General** said that in 1995, when he had assumed the office of Prime Minister of Portugal, the world had been surfing a wave of optimism. The Cold War had ended, technological progress had been in full swing, the Internet had been spreading and there had been an idea that globalization would not only increase global wealth but that it would "trickle down" and benefit everyone. Twenty years later, the picture was mixed. It was true that globalization had dramatically increased trade and wealth around the world, and it was true that the number of absolute poor had been reduced and that living conditions had improved all over the world. However, it was also true that globalization and technological progress had contributed to increased inequality. Eight individuals held as much wealth as half of the world's population. At the same time, it was clear that people had been left behind in the rust belts of the world and youth unemployment had become a severe problem in certain regions, not only undermining the futures of those young people but also creating an obstacle to the development of their countries. Without hope, they could, in some circumstances, be easily recruited by extremist organizations.

13. It was true that that had generated a loss of confidence in Governments, in international organizations like the United Nations, and in the ideas of global governance and multilateral institutions. There was no way for countries to solve those problems alone; global answers were needed. Multilateral forms of governance were needed and the trust deficit would have to be overcome. The 2030 Agenda held enormous potential as it aimed at fair globalization, at not leaving anyone behind and at eradicating poverty. It also aimed at creating the conditions for people to trust again, not only in political systems, but in multilateral forms of governance and international organizations such as the United Nations.

14. It was clear that the global economy was improving, albeit slowly, and political, institutional and societal fragility was increasing. Fragility was largely responsible for the spread of many conflicts and for the linkage of those conflicts with the threat of global terrorism. That was why sustainable development agendas needed to be linked to peace agendas. However, there was a caveat: that link should not be a pretext for moving resources from development needs to security. Rather, development was crucial and it was necessary to recognize that sustainable and inclusive development was in itself a major factor in the prevention of conflict, natural disasters and other issues that were dependent on social resilience.

15. When examining global megatrends such as population growth, climate change, food insecurity, water scarcity and chaotic urbanization in certain parts of the world, it was obvious that they all interacted and that climate change was the main accelerator of all the others. There must be a strong reaffirmation of commitment to the implementation of the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and enhanced ambition with respect to climate change, as the Agreement itself was not enough to solve global warming. Solving climate change was necessary for the future of humankind and the planet, and it was also the right and smart thing to do. The green economy was increasingly the economy of the future. Green business was good business, and those who did not bet on green technologies would inevitably lose economic leadership in the future.

16. It was important to respond not only to the problems of those living under Governments, but also to the problems of refugees and migrants. The effort to leave no one behind would encourage ways of looking at migration with a different perspective, a perspective not of rejection but of understanding that solving that issue was an important component of solving global problems. More legal avenues must be found for migrants, and there must be more respect for their human rights. Global megatrends were compelling increasing numbers of people to migrate. Unnecessary migration should be prevented, and necessary migration should be orderly.

17. Developed countries needed to uphold their commitments with respect to official development assistance. At the same time, it should be understood that that would not be enough for funding the implementation of the Goals. States should mobilize more of their own resources through domestic tax reform, but the international community should also be encouraged to help fight tax evasion, money-laundering and illicit flows of capital, which had created a situation in which more cash left developing countries than entered those countries in the form of official development assistance. International financial institutions should be able to leverage resources and increase their capacity to fund the Goals. Countries should also be helped to access global and financial markets and attract private investment, as that was necessary for achievement of the Goals.

18. The world was facing a fourth industrial revolution that would have a dramatic impact on labour markets, and which would pose a problem for developing countries relying on cheap labour power as their comparative advantage. Many cheap labour jobs would be destroyed in the future due to robotics and automation. That was also a problem for many developed societies, such as the United States, where there might not be a future need for truck and automobile drivers. Those trends should be anticipated, and countries and international organizations should work together, and not merely react but foresee what was coming and invest in education, training and adaptation of the labour market so that it could cope with the challenges of the future.

19. Reform was also needed at the country level and at the United Nations level. Countries should look into their governance mechanisms and the methods they used to ensure the participation of citizens, businesses and civil society in development objectives. They should also examine their methods of fighting corruption and guaranteeing not only civil and political rights, but also economic, social and cultural rights. Even though the United Nations development system had made important contributions, namely, in the context of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, it was not fully ready for the new challenges of the 2030 Agenda. That was why the report of the Secretary-General on the reform of the United Nations development system had been presented to the Council.

20. That report highlighted a few areas of concern. At the country level, there was a need for empowered resident coordinators and more effective and more coordinated country teams that were able to deliver support to Governments according to their strategies. Governments were leading the implementation of the Agenda, and there must be more accountability to them at the national level. At the same time, there should be a level of coordination, transparency and accountability at the global level, that is, to the Council and the General Assembly. Gender parity at the United Nations must also be an instrument for supporting gender mainstreaming in the application of all policies related to the 2030 Agenda. Finally, funding needed to be in line with the objectives of coherence and accountability. That was why there had been a proposal for a funding compact to guarantee coherence instead of dispersion of funding.

21. He welcomed the strong commitment to the implementation of the Agenda and the strong affirmation of support for multilateral governance as the way to lead the 2030 Agenda, respecting the leadership of Member States while recognizing that only by working together could trust be rebuilt, and could the Agenda bring the fair globalization that the world needed.

Keynote address

22. **Professor Sachs** (Director, Earth Institute at Columbia University), delivering a keynote address on the state of the world, said that according to International Monetary Fund estimates of global output for 2017, there was enough money to end all poverty, ensure universal access to health care and quality education and provide the investment needed for environmental sustainability. At the same time, however, over 2,000 billionaires held $7.7 trillion. The world had arrived at an era of stunning inequality alongside unprecedented wealth and productivity. War and military spending cost the world an estimated $13 trillion per year, while the cost of implementing the Sustainable Development Goals was estimated at $3 trillion. Funds spent on war or those stored in offshore tax havens could easily pay for sustainable development.

23. Governments must take action in five main areas. The first was quality health care and education. In the least developed countries, only 20 per cent of children finished secondary school. The second area was sustainable land management, as nearly every country suffered from a land management crisis, with unprecedented loss of biodiversity and degradation of soil, water and tree cover. The third area was decent employment and infrastructure for all. The fourth area was the decarbonization of the energy system, which was an essential condition of planetary safety. By 2050, global emissions should be down to zero, and electricity should be generated through zero-carbon

energy sources. The fifth area was good governance, which involved honesty, fairness and transparency in government.

24. He saw a number of opportunities for change. Firstly, the world was in the midst of one of the greatest scientific and technological revolutions in human history: information and communication technologies had given rise to breakthroughs in delivery of health care, education, governance and finance, even to the remotest places on the planet. Secondly, through political will, large-scale infrastructure projects were under way in places like China and Africa. Thirdly, reduced technology costs meant that renewable energy could be deployed in areas located far from the grid. Fourthly, there was an opportunity to mobilize the global knowledge pool and grant students and researchers everywhere free access to thousands of online scholarly publications.

25. A number of obstacles nevertheless remained. Firstly, lobby groups for vested interests, such as the powerful coal, oil and gas industry, resisted change. That lobby would kill the planet if it continued in its current form. The second obstacle was presented by certain extremely rich individuals who resisted taxation, accountability and disclosure, and who controlled the levers of power. Belligerent world leaders who took part in proxy wars posed the third obstacle. The fourth obstacle was the lack of bold strategies and the continuation of business as usual. The fifth obstacle was the nearly one billion people who were struggling to survive when a fraction of the world's wealth would close the financing gap.

26. In light of those opportunities and obstacles, certain steps should be pursued. The first step was to ensure the global compliance of the oil and gas industry, as a few powerful industries must not be allowed to endanger the planet. In addition, investment was needed in environment, social and governance projects. A special fund should be created for the implementation of the Goals in low-income countries. Universal education and health coverage and the eradication of diseases such as HIV/AIDS and malaria were critical, and billionaires should step forward to help. The trillions of dollars in tax havens also needed to be tapped, and the $2 trillion spent on armaments should be diverted to development. Crippling debt should be converted into investments in Sustainable Development Goal areas, and a small tax on offshore deposits would produce the funding necessary for universal education and health care. The Security Council should assume more responsibility for the Goals. Every one of the world's conflict areas was a disaster zone in terms of the Goals, although there had been successes, such as the agreement made between the five plus one group and Iran. That agreement showed how the world could promote the peace that was crucial for the success of the Goals. Funding for damages and losses due to environmental disasters should follow the polluter pays principle. Countries that suffered natural disasters should be entitled to compensation, as such disasters were caused by the emissions of the richest countries. Finally, technology road maps were needed; in that connection, hundreds of universities were prepared to work together with Governments to put knowledge at the service of development.

27. **The President** said that the Bureau of the Council wished to share the main messages emanating from the first week of the high-level political forum, particularly with respect to the regional dimensions of Goals 1, 2 and 9. The regional forums on sustainable development were a critical link between the national and global levels. While many countries had improved inter-institutional and intersectoral coordination and had adopted sustainable development strategies, others had seen increasing inequality. Parliaments were mainstreaming the Goals at the local level, and key drivers of transformation in all regions included women and youth. Mobilizing domestic and foreign financing was crucial for regional implementation.

28. Despite progress towards Goal 1, 767 million people still lived in extreme poverty. The greatest progress had been seen in East and South-East Asia, while sub-Saharan Africa still experienced high levels of extreme poverty. Poverty statistics needed to take account of factors other than economic growth. Preliminary data showed that in 2016, less than half of the world's population had been covered by a social protection system. Quality education was one of the most important means for lifting people out of poverty and must be made freely available to all. Investment in infrastructure was also needed for poverty eradication.

29. In order to achieve Goal 2, the interdependence of poverty and hunger must be acknowledged. Food security and nutrition governance must be more inclusive at all levels. Urgent action was required to respond to severe food insecurity and famine, and legal frameworks must be strengthened to promote a rights-based approach to food security. Women's access to land, productive assets and decision-making were critical for achieving food security and sustainable agriculture. Agriculture must become more knowledge-intensive to achieve income and productivity targets for small and family farmers, and technology and agricultural innovation should be guided by local needs. Production practices should be diversified in

order to ensure resilience to climate change and in order to prevent land and water degradation.

30. Robust infrastructure underpinned all growth. Transportation, information and communications technology, electricity, water and sanitation were important for employment and economic well-being. While trade was also important, local demand must be increased by empowering the middle classes in developing countries. Efforts should be made to ensure that small and medium-sized enterprises and microenterprises were given support, and that small businesses had access to financing and technology. The digital economy had created unprecedented opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises to access new markets through electronic platforms; new rules for e-commerce could establish a level playing field for them internationally.

31. Industrialization and infrastructure should support and not harm the environment. Innovations such as smart metering for utilities, enhanced agroforestry data, satellite imaging of crops to determine irrigation needs and blockchain technologies to enhance market access were used around the world, and the cost of such technologies was decreasing. The challenge would be to increase access to them and ensure that they were shared equitably.

Messages from the high-level political forum on sustainable development

32. **Ms. Chatardová** (Czechia), Vice-President, reporting on the outcome of the meeting of senior officials held the previous week, said that the Goal 3 review had emphasized the multi-sectoral nature of successful health interventions. The social determinants of health must be addressed so that progress in achieving Goal 3 would lead to progress in other Goals as well. Health care needed to be linked to initiatives in education, nutrition, empowerment of women and girls, climate change and air pollution, and financial mechanisms such as taxation. Governments and other stakeholders must adequately fund health research, community-based interventions, health infrastructure and social safety nets. She stressed the importance of work at the local level, of listening to the voices of the community, including youth, women, indigenous peoples, older persons and persons with disabilities; of training and hiring health workers; and of devoting greater effort to collecting and analysing disaggregated data and making it transparent and accessible to all. The most effective way to improve health care was to educate girls and increase investment in women and girls, including in their sexual and reproductive health.

33. The achievement of Goal 5 was necessary for bringing about prosperous societies. Some progress had been made in ending discrimination against women and girls in law, policy and practices since the adoption of the Goals. Many countries had developed legal provisions that linked the development agenda to human rights conventions calling for the elimination of discrimination against women and girls, and some had made efforts to encourage women's participation in science, technology, engineering and business. However, much remained to be done before systemic and structural changes would take hold. A greater effort must be made to improve the capacity of State and non-State actors to collect and analyse gender-disaggregated data.

34. With regard to leveraging interlinkages, various concepts and terminologies such as coordination, policy coherence, synergies, and trade-offs, should be clarified; interlinkages and coordination were connected, but not the same. Political leadership was important for effective interministerial coordination and policy coherence. The success of a whole-of-government approach should be evaluated by results rather than by processes. Interlinkages should be reflected in incremental budget allocation, highlighted in voluntary national reviews and prominently featured in revision of the Secretary-General's voluntary guidelines. With so much of the implementation of the Goals centred on data, an effort must be made to implement tier 1 indicators, work on tier 2 indicators and develop methodologies for tier 3 indicators. She stressed the need for disaggregated data, the creation of national statistical offices, and the collection of data from those actually at risk of being left behind.

35. **Mr. Barros Melet** (Chile), Vice-President, reporting on some of the other issues addressed at the meeting of senior officials, said that in order for the Goals to be achieved in small island developing States, political commitment was required at the highest level, and all political actors must be consulted throughout the development process. Building implementation capacity across all sectors, monitoring progress regularly and reporting to the public would foster a culture of transparency and accountability. Stakeholder engagement and effective partnerships, including with the private sector, civil society, youth, academia and development partners of those States, would be key to facilitating implementation. Regional initiatives such as the Pacific Non-communicable Diseases Roadmap promoted evidence-based policies and discouraged consumption of unhealthy foods.

36. Reporting on the session on countries in special situations, he said that investment in smallholder

agriculture was a way for least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and post-conflict countries to develop resilience and achieve the Goals. Unemployment was a significant challenge for least developed countries. Sustained and environmentally sound economic growth was needed for job creation. Landlocked countries faced particular problems that should be addressed through enhanced access to markets and new technologies.

37. Development finance for countries in special situations should be more reliable and diversified. More systematic collaboration between Governments and communities was necessary to address barriers to financing. Post-conflict countries could suffer from fragmentation of development planning. Middle-income countries were home to 75 per cent of the global population, over a third of global gross domestic product (GDP) and a quarter of the global export and import sector. Countries should not be classified as middle-income solely on the basis of income per capita. Life expectancy, institutional development, the number of people living in poverty, the unemployment rate and technological progress, among other indicators, should also be taken into account.

38. With regard to the session on science, technology and innovation, he said that flexible and participatory road maps were essential for achievement of the Goals. Where possible, needs should be met through existing low-cost technologies, which required scientists to engage with the realities faced by local communities. Smart investment by Governments, the private sector and other partners should be scaled up, including for capacity-building in science, technology and innovation to unlock the creative potential of youth and women. Incentives for the private sector would help channel technology and innovation into processes for achievement of the Goals. Efforts should be made to understand the potentially disruptive social effects of new technologies such as nanotechnology, automation, artificial intelligence, gene editing and three-dimensional printing. The Technology Facilitation Mechanism was well placed to engage with science and should be supported as a catalyst for multi-stakeholder partnerships.

39. As for the session on science-policy interface and emerging issues, he said that science was crucial for understanding the trade-offs and interlinkages among the Goals. While indicators could only describe the past, science could provide informed advice on the future and affect policymaking on sustainable development. The science-policy interface should take place within an inclusive multi-stakeholder framework that drew on all sciences, as well as traditional and indigenous knowledge. Lastly, better use must be made of available data. Building scientists' capacity to engage with the public beyond academia was as important as educating policymakers on scientific issues.

40. **Mr. Schulz** (Germany), Vice-President, reporting on other issues addressed at the meeting of senior officials, said that, in the discussions on multi-stakeholder perspectives on eradicating poverty in a changing world, it was agreed that Governments should find ways to incorporate the voices of other stakeholders in the review process. The private sector had a crucial role to play in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Farmers were ready for closer cooperation with Governments, which was critical for sustainable agriculture. Women's groups were helping to address gender-based violence and were promoting women's empowerment through awareness campaigns, capacity-building and improved access to financing. Global youth-led initiatives promoted accountability at the national level and were spearheading various initiatives to support implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

41. The Ocean Conference held in June had created universal momentum for the creation of new partnerships for the achievement of Goal 14. Oceans could provide sources of renewable energy such as tidal, wave and wind energy. It was important to continue discussions on an international, legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction.

42. Respect for indigenous and local knowledge facilitated the full engagement of communities and helped preserve the notion of environmental stewardship and responsibility. Indigenous peoples should be included in decision-making at all levels, and local communities should be borne in mind in the development of conservation plans.

43. **Mr. Munir** (Pakistan), Vice-President, reporting on some of the other issues addressed at the meeting of senior officials, said that poverty was not defined by monetary income alone, but rather by multiple dimensions that needed to be addressed. Progress towards eradicating poverty in the era of the Millennium Development Goals had been uneven, with inequity persisting and many communities left behind. The Multidimensional Poverty Index was a tool used by many countries to complement traditional, income-based measures. Good governance was needed to assess and take action on the information gleaned from

that Index and from other sources. Multidimensional poverty was influenced by a number of detrimental and interdependent trends, such as climate change, destruction of natural resources, pollution and other stressors.

44. With regard to investment and financing for the Sustainable Development Goals, he said that national efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda were impacted by the macroeconomic climate, the threats posed by climate change, humanitarian crises and conflicts. The 2017 Economic and Social Council forum on financing for development follow-up had sent a strong message that the international community remained deeply committed to inclusiveness, multilateralism and the global partnership for sustainable development. The intergovernmentally agreed conclusions and recommendations of the forum on financing for development follow-up had reaffirmed key elements of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development. The outcome had highlighted the need for further reform in order to ensure the full and timely implementation of the Goals.

45. International public finance would continue to complement the efforts made by countries to mobilize domestic resources, especially in the poorest countries. A strong business case must be made for increased private capital investment in the Goals, as current levels were inadequate. Greater public scrutiny was also needed; to that end, the United Nations should develop guidelines to ensure that private sector investment shared risks and rewards fairly, included clear accountability mechanisms and met social and environmental standards.

Presentations by the ministerial chairs of the regional forums on sustainable development

46. **Mr. Daoudi** (Morocco), Minister Delegate to the Head of Government in charge of General Affairs and Governance, presenting the conclusions and recommendations of the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development, 2017, said that the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), in cooperation with the Government of Morocco and the League of Arab States, had organized the Arab Forum under the theme of "Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing Arab region".

47. The discussions at that Forum had addressed urgent regional and transnational issues, primarily social, economic and environmental disparities, youth unemployment; and discrimination against women. The participants had all agreed that conflicts, extremism and violence had undermined previous achievements and would impact the rights of future generations. The message of the Forum had stressed a number of principles, such as commitment to the Doha Declaration on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, relevant ministerial decisions and resolutions adopted by the League of Arab States, the need to end the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land and the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination.

48. The Forum had emphasized the importance of leadership and national ownership to implementing the 2030 Agenda based on specific circumstances and national priorities, and with input from civil society stakeholders. The Arab Forum had also discussed the policies, mechanisms, and the constitutional and legal procedures that aimed at achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

49. The Forum had concluded that in order to eradicate poverty and promote prosperity, transformational change was needed in the Arab region. Such transformation required political, economic and social restructuring, as well as the integration of environmental issues, labour market reform, strengthened syndicates, social dialogue and reform of financial and taxation policies in order to ensure fairer income distribution.

50. The Forum had also addressed a number of regional priorities such as gender equality and empowerment of women as an agent of development throughout the Arab region. Legal frameworks should be reviewed in order to put an end to violence and harmful practices against women and girls. National sovereignty over natural resources, sound and sustainable management, and protection and use of natural resources were also of paramount importance.

51. Food security challenges were chronic and urgent, especially with respect to refugees and internally displaced persons. Agricultural production needed to be strengthened and dependence on imports reduced. Sustainable agriculture needed to be developed as a strategic option for the States of the region. An integrated approach to health should be adopted. The Arab Forum had paid special attention to disability issues and human rights and their relationship to the 2030 Agenda.

52. **Mr. Guzmán Ortiz** (Mexico), Chief of Staff of the President of Mexico and Executive Secretary of the National Council for Sustainable Agenda, presenting the conclusions and recommendations of the Forum of the Countries of Latin American and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development, 2017, said that the Forum,

held in April, had reaffirmed had that the eradication of poverty in all its forms was the most pressing challenge faced by the world and was essential for achieving sustainable development. It had also underscored the importance of the New Urban Agenda, multilateral agreements on financing for development, the fight against climate change, and gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, and recognized that Governments shouldered the greatest responsibility when it came to implementing the 2030 Agenda. Forthcoming meetings of the Forum would include representation from civil society groups and academia as well as the private sector, which had the potential to change consumption and production patterns. Official development assistance, climate finance and South-South cooperation would be crucial.

53. Further efforts were needed to reduce the illicit financial flows that were the result of tax evasion and corruption. States should not promulgate or apply unilateral economic, financial or trade measures not in accordance with international law. The Forum urged the United Nations to provide data on sustainable development progress that went beyond per capita income and acknowledged all dimensions of development. Through peer review and peer learning at the regional level, the countries in the Forum were exchanging best practices and identifying opportunities for regional cooperation. Recently launched discussions on the impact of automation and new technologies on sustainable development would be expanded with support from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC); the Forum also planned to establish a task force to elaborate relevant regional recommendations. The region's commitment to the 2030 Agenda was reflected by the fact that in 2016 and 2017, 14 Latin American countries had presented voluntary national reviews.

54. **Ms. Edillon** (Philippines), Undersecretary for Planning and Policy, National Economic and Development Authority, presenting the conclusions and recommendations of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development 2017, said that two important documents had been adopted at the session, namely the regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific and the form and function of the Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development. Asia and the Pacific was the first region to develop a regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda. The road map had identified priority areas, implementation measures and a process for tracking the achievement of the Goals, and was expected to achieve three objectives: strengthening regional cooperation on the priority issues identified by the member States, enabling continued and more efficient and coordinated support for member States, and facilitating more effective knowledge-sharing among countries. The road map identified eight priority areas for regional cooperation, the most important of which was the integration of the Goals in national development planning.

55. The Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development would participate in the regional conference structure of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, providing a regional perspective by identifying regional trends and sharing best practices. It would also support follow-up and review of regional progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda, and would provide capacity-building assistance to countries with special needs.

56. **Mr. Meatchi** (Togo), Director of Planning and Development, presenting the conclusions and recommendations of the session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, said that many factors impacted poverty eradication, including changing demographics, climate change, the depletion of natural resources and environmental degradation. The Forum had examined a number of subtopics related to the implementation of the Goals, such as ways to guarantee consensus on sustainable development and prosperity. The integrated nature of the African Union Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda called for integrated and inclusive approaches that were based on decisions made in various United Nations and African forums. It was therefore important for countries to develop road maps for the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 that were in line with national plans.

57. Economic growth alone was a necessary but not sufficient condition for eradicating poverty. Achievement of the Goals would require a structural transformation based on economic diversification and accelerated industrialization. As official development assistance remained vital for the achievement of Goal 1 by 2030, it was important to strengthen existing aid programmes, especially for countries with special needs in Africa. The high-level political forum must pay attention to the problems of poverty in Africa faced by least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States.

58. With respect to food security, the interaction among low productivity and income, weak purchasing power and the degradation of agricultural production in Africa had given rise to large-scale famines. Member

States were far from meeting their objectives on health care, such as those set out in the Abuja Declaration on Roll Back Malaria in Africa. The Forum had also addressed gender equality and empowerment of girls and women, resilient infrastructure and the promotion of industrialization and innovation and the sustainable use of marine environments.

59. **Ms. Monnoyer-Smith** (France), Commissioner-General for Sustainable Development and Inter-Ministerial Delegate for Sustainable Development at the Ministry of Environment, Energy and Seas, presenting the main outcomes of the Economic Commission for Europe Regional Forum on Sustainable Development 2017, said that the Forum had been extremely well attended. Members of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe were committed to the Goals; one third of the participants in the 2016 and 2017 voluntary national reviews had been from the region. In a peer learning segment, participants had had an opportunity to exchange experiences and best practices. The Forum had enjoyed strong participation by civil society, and representatives from the private sector had reported that businesses were increasingly aware that they shared responsibility for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The private sector would also play an important role in mobilizing the necessary financial resources.

60. The regional Forum had stressed the need for intersectoral action and devoted much time to the links among various Goals and their impact on institutions and policymaking. Goals 3, 5 and 9 were considered especially critical. A round table had been held on adapting the Goals to local and regional situations; overall, the process of integrating the Goals into national laws and strategies seemed to be advanced in the region. Consultative processes had helped to adapt the Goals to national realities, and parliaments were increasingly involved in the implementation of the Goals.

61. Another round table had been dedicated to the importance of subregional cooperation for implementation of the Goals. Such cooperation could contribute to the implementation of the Goals in areas such as commercial investment, infrastructure, management of natural resources, migration, energy, agriculture and health, and could take the form of informal dialogues, formal intergovernmental organizations and legally binding instruments. It could also address cross-border issues such as marine pollution off shared coastlines, for example, the Saint-Raphaël-Monaco-Genoa (RAMOGE) Agreement between France, Italy and Monaco.

62. A third round table had addressed the follow-up to the 2030 Agenda, which required access to relevant and reliable disaggregated data. Dialogue between decision-makers and statisticians was essential, and national statistical bureaux were important for coordinating data. The United Nations system could play a role in fostering cooperation among various actors and in building national statistics capacity.

The meeting rose at 11.35 a.m.